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SUBJECT: GOI PLEDGES ENHANCED OSCE/EU COOPERATION DURING
ITS PRESIDENCY

Classified By: POL MIN COUN TOM COUNTRYMAN, REASON 1.5(B)&(D).

[11](#). (C) Summary: On June 23, MFA Political Director Giancarlo Aragona told visiting USOSCE Ambassador Stephan Minikes that the US and Italy must build on strong bilateral relations and work together to put transatlantic relations back on a strong footing. The OSCE is also extremely important in this process. Minikes said he would continue to push for strong USG support for the OSCE and for OSCE's role in promoting transatlantic value systems. Aragona said that one essential tenet of the Italian EU Presidency would be that the GOI must improve transatlantic relations and restore the US-European dialogue to a more dynamic and productive level. Aragona and Minikes agreed that a top priority for the OSCE is to push all sides to complete the withdrawal of Russian equipment, ammunition and troops from Moldova. They also concurred on the need to make changes in OSCE summit and ministerial preparations and procedures. End Summary

[12](#). (C) Aragona began the meeting by noting that Amb. Minikes' visit was one of many between senior level GOI and USG officials, on both sides of the Atlantic, in recent months. This ongoing exchange symbolized the desire of both governments to build on strong bilateral relations, and to work together to put transatlantic relations back on a strong footing. The OSCE is extremely important in this process, continued Aragona, and he noted that FM Frattini, in a recent address to the Italian parliament, cited the OSCE's importance to regional stabilization in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. Aragona said that even after NATO and EU enlargement, the OSCE is still relevant, perhaps more so now than ever before. OSCE is active and vital in strategic areas in which neither the EU nor NATO can, at the moment, devote many resources.

[13](#). (C) Minikes agreed, and said that he had been impressed by EU cooperation and coordination with the OSCE under the Greek and Danish presidencies, and looked forward to exploring further joint efforts under the Italian Presidency. During its Presidency, Italy could help by keeping the focus on the OSCE in the Political Steering Committee discussions in Brussels. The OSCE receives strong political support from the NSC and DOS, which is backed by solid financial contributions and personnel secondments. The US Congress is also a critical support group and very interested in the democratization activities of OSCE field missions. The Helsinki Commission in Congress is influential, and the Parliamentary Assembly and inter-parliamentary dialogue are becoming more important.

[14](#). (C) Minikes said he would continue to push for strong USG support for the OSCE and for its efforts to promote transatlantic value systems, particularly in OSCE's 20 non-EU/NATO countries. Minikes noted that in the future, it will be more challenging to keep the US interested in European Affairs, since within about 50 years, given current population trends, over fifty percent of US citizens will be of non-European origin for the first time in America's history, with the result that, the classical ties of a common heritage will not be as strong. Aragona and Minikes both agreed that a strong and strongly supported OSCE can be an important pillar in the transatlantic bridge and that only a strong and effective OSCE will be useful in that context.

[15](#). (C) Aragona said that one essential tenet of the Italian EU Presidency would be that the GOI must improve transatlantic relations and restore the US-European dialogue to a more dynamic and productive level. PM Berlusconi and FM Frattini have stated numerous times that it is the top priority for the next six months. The GOI wants to help reconstruct the historic partnership and bonds to a level stronger than during the cold war. Italy will do what it can to go beyond statements. It will promote progress on tough issues such as NP/WMD and terrorism. For example, Aragona said, Italy was pushing for a strong statement at the US/EU Summit in Washington DC urging enhanced transatlantic cooperation on issues of common concern.

[16](#). (C) Aragona said that another priority for the Italian presidency, and an area where the OSCE could play a role, is the Middle East Peace Process. The GOI feels that there is a need for balance, and can use its historic open relations

with both sides to advantage. He cited PM Sharon's recent statement that Israel had no better friend than Italy in Europe. Minikes said the CSCE/OSCE approach and culture of inclusiveness could be exported and applied to the Mediterranean partners in general.

17. (C) Aragona and Minikes agreed that a top priority for the OSCE is to push all sides to complete the withdrawal of Russian ammunition, weapons and troops from Moldova, in keeping with Russia's Istanbul Commitments, and to help

broker a comprehensive political settlement of the Transnistria conflict. Minikes averred that a solution can only be reached if all players; OSCE, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and the Transnistrian leadership, are committed. We must put pressure on Moldovan President Voronin and make him realize that the future of his country lies with Europe. Voronin may need to be pushed, and until he actually takes steps in the political solution process that cause him to feel some pain, his commitment to a settlement remains in question.

18. (C) Aragona thought that Russian leadership, particularly holdovers from Soviet Union days, may be afraid that once the Moldova situation is solved, Russian influence in the Caucasus would decrease. Aragona promised to discuss with the Dutch Chairman in Office how the EU and OSCE could work together to broker a solution. Minikes agreed, and warned that if not solved soon, international interest would shift from Moldova to other more important and pressing issues. Minikes said we need to make clear to Russia that Moldova/Transnistria remains a Western priority. Aragona said that if a solution were found it could open an opportunity for cooperative EU/OSCE border management and PKO.

19. (C) Moving on to Afghanistan, Aragona said the GOI was in favor of a border observer role for OSCE. Minikes said he was working hard with Ambassador David Johnson in Washington on proposals for police and border monitoring training and elections assistance.

10. (C) On Chechnya, Minikes said the Russians were looking for an OSCE seal of approval without having to answer for the human rights situation. It was hard to see how the situation could be assessed properly without an OSCE presence. We need people on the ground rather than parachutists who jump in and out. Aragona agreed that the OSCE had an important role to play in Chechnya. The GOI is open to discussing all possibilities, and agrees any effort must be continuous and significant, not a "fig leaf." Aragona questioned the need for an on the ground presence. Which is more effective, a presence in a small confined area, which is all that could be established at the moment given the security situation, or a focused international effort to call attention to the tragedy? We need a creative solution, he said. Minikes agreed; we need to get the job done in the most efficient and effective manner.

11. (C) In response to Aragona's question, Minikes told Aragona that a Summit in 2004 would only be possible if the U.S. presidential elections allowed, and OSCE could come up with "deliverables" worthy of presidential participation. It could also be an opportunity to renew the underlying principles upon which the OSCE was founded, and recommit leadership to those principles. Russia was watching carefully how US-European leadership views the OSCE - a summit would reinforce its importance as a transatlantic institution. Aragona agreed. Italy would only consider a summit if there were something important enough for his PM to sign. If there were a chance to bring President Bush to Europe, Italy would support the summit. Aragona and Minikes agreed there was no ground for a clear "yes," but the situation could evolve.

12. (C) Minikes said Ministerial Council procedures need reform. He would like to see more discussion rather than 55 ministers reading canned interventions. He said U/S Grossman thought a structure similar to that used in the G-8, with more thematic/regional discussions, would be more attractive to Ministers and to the U.S. Secretary of State. Aragona said that this year FM Frattini would be at the Ministerial in Maastricht; in fact, the GOI had rearranged some EU Presidency meetings to make this possible. Italy will support efforts to make the discussions more serious and meaningful. It would be good to have some concrete results, on Moldova, for example.

13. (C) Aragona said Russia had unrealistic expectations for the OSCE Economic Dimension. Italy is open to strengthening the dimension, but also knows the OSCE can't

compete with EU, IMF, EBRD, etc. Minikes agreed, and noted that the mandate of the economic dimension was not to compete with other IFIs, but to bring a different kind of assistance to the table; to stimulate investment, small and medium

businesses, and human resource development. Aragona offered to host an OSCE conference on economic development during the Italian Presidency. PM Berlusconi and Minister Urso are very interested in such development.

¶14. (C) Minikes said that he was now interviewing candidates for the Media Rep position. The Hungarian candidate looks best. Aragona said that when Minikes and the Italian Ambassador to OSCE finished interviewing they should coordinate on a choice. Minikes agreed.

¶15. (C) Minikes ended by noting the success of the recent OSCE conference on Anti-Semitism. Germany has offered to host a follow) on conference in Berlin next year. Aragona promised Italian Support at Maastricht for such a conference.

¶16. (U) Ambassador Minikes has cleared this cable.

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